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SOURCE Hua-ch'iao Jih-pao.

OFFICIAL DISCUSSES LAND-REFORM PROBLEMS  
AFFECTING OVERSEAS CHINESE

Wu Chih-chih, chairman of the Committee on Overseas Chinese Affairs of the Kwangtung Provincial Government, discusses six problems of land reform procedures giving concern to Chinese overseas and their relatives in China. They are: classification, land and movable property distribution, overseas Chinese remittances to China, restitution by overseas landlords, rent deposits and loans, and overseas Chinese and foreign travel permits.

He points out that in handling several of these matters land reform officials have made regrettable errors and points the way to rectification.

The chairman of the Committee on Overseas Chinese Affairs of the Kwangtung Provincial Government, Wu Chih-chih, in discussing [date and place not indicated] the problems of land reform as related to overseas Chinese and their families resident in China, pointed out that in the hsien which has the heaviest proportion of overseas population, among the experimental land-reform hsien, 97.8 percent of the overseas families are in the poor and hired farmer class, 0.6 percent in the wealthy farmer class, and 1.6 percent in the landlord class. This is considered fairly representative of the classification throughout Kwangtung.

Areas from which figures are available show that land distribution to families of overseas Chinese has been on the same basis as for those with no overseas connections. Where poor and hired farmers had an average of 0.16 mou each before land reform they now have 0.5 mou. Middle-class farmers who formerly averaged 0.6 mou each now have 0.66 mou. In addition, all the above classes with overseas connections shared in the distribution of movable property. In accordance with the legal proclamation (Regulation VI of the Government Administration Council) on land-reform procedure among families of overseas Chinese, small landholders renting out a portion of their land were not disturbed in their ownership if the amount of land rented out was not more than twice the average holding for people of the same class in the area.

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Wu discussed six problems in connection with land reform that have given concern to Chinese overseas.

1. Classification

In some areas land-reform workers have tended to lower the classification of people with overseas Chinese connections, reducing landlords to wealthy farmers and so on down the line. The purpose was to make land reform easier for them. However, in other areas the amount of overseas remittance income was added to local land income, and this resulted in raising the classification with resulting hardships to many. Since the government, aside from the destruction of the remnant of feudalism among overseas Chinese, has in mind only the protection of their interests, any errors in classification should be adjusted equitably by the authorities concerned with the aid of the masses.

2. Distribution

In some cases of land distribution overseas Chinese were counted in on the distribution on the same basis as others. Thus, some overseas landlords were mistakenly given as much land as local people. On the other hand, in other places some folk in the poor and hired-farmer classes were receiving small remittances from overseas, they were denied any part in the distribution of movable property. The law relating to this matter (Regulation VIII of the Government Administration Council entitled "Method of Dealing With Land and Property of Dependents of Overseas Chinese Resident in China" provides that such dependents shall share in the distribution of land and movable property on the same basis as all others in the same class. If they have a regular income from overseas and are unable or unwilling to engage in agricultural production, they may be given less land or none at all according to the actual conditions involved.

3. Overseas Chinese Remittances

There is a vast difference between income from rent exploitation by landlords in China and remittances from Chinese overseas. The principle on which the Central People's Government works in the matter of foreign exchange is expressed in the phrase "Foreign exchange is a state business, but overseas Chinese exchange remittances to dependents are private business." That means that dependents receiving remittances of foreign currency from abroad turn it in to the government banks and take its equivalent in people's currency as their own private property.

However, in some areas from 2 to 5 percent has been deducted from such remittances. In other cases, remittances of overseas landlords have been confiscated and the local authorities have presumed to act as their agents in handling the funds. In still other cases, overseas remittances have been regarded as funds secured from rent exploitation and used as an excuse for raising the recipients' classification in the land-reform status. This is a very grave error. In the future, land-reform cadres should not permit such violations of the law to go on. Most of these remittances come from Chinese laborers abroad and should be used to buy equipment for increasing production or for purchase of daily necessities in a time of shortage, thus lightening the government's relief load. If by the receipt of moderate remittances the dependents of overseas Chinese may live a little better, no discouragement should be offered them.

4. Restitution

Overseas Chinese landlords residing in China, like all others, should be required to refund rent and rent deposits, but the law must be observed and no advantage taken of them. However, any who show a disposition to be recalcitrant or nonlaw-abiding should be turned over to the courts.

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5. Rent Deposits and Loans

Dependents of overseas Chinese who rent out a small piece of ground may have difficulty over rent deposits and loans. Authorities should aid by counseling on the settlement of such problems with a view to the internal harmony of the agricultural community. Privileges of free borrowing and lending for industrial or commercial purposes should not be abridged.

6. Overseas Chinese and Foreign Travel

The latest ruling of the Ministry of Public Security and the Commission of Overseas Chinese Affairs states that no wicked landlord will be permitted to leave the country. Some overseas landlords are included in the list of those denied exit. Otherwise, small landholders who rent out land, those landlords who are chiefly engaged in industry and commerce for a livelihood, and descendants of landlords born overseas who are not guilty of exploitation or other illegal activities within China may be permitted to leave the country after complying with the required procedures.

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